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ABSTRACT

Widespread attention to the concept of teacher burnout along with theories and prescriptions for dealing with "midlife crises" have implications for the tenured higher education faculty in communication education. To avert such problems college administrative staff can promote faculty development through (1) a systematic approach to long-term planning, (2) instituting intrauniversity visiting professorships, and (3) promoting opportunities for faculty exchanges with other universities. Long-term planning involves the faculty member preparing a three-year plan that includes courses to be taught, research to be conducted, services to be performed, professional activities expected, and any anticipated factors such as leaves or grants that would require adjustments. Each year, the faculty member and program update this plan and indicate whether the goals for the previous year have been met and what modifications are required for future planning. Intrauniversity sabbatical leaves provide one month's summer salary plus an academic year free of departmental responsibilities in order for the faculty member to take courses as well as to team teach in one or two courses in another department or school at the university. The third approach lies in such programs as the Fulbright exchange program and other university exchange programs. Finally, a new program is needed for professors who want opportunities for their own development that are less drastic than leaving academic life but more flexible than simply teaching at another institution. One possibility is a flexible program of time-off credits that could be used when a professor most needs a leave. (HOD)

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CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF TENURED FACULTY

by

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Continued Development of Tenured Faculty

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When I agreed last spring to prepare this paper, I did so because I wanted to learn more about this topic. As I tell my students as they select topics for research papers, ask a question that you want answered. The question I posed for myself was: How can we continue the professional growth and development of our tenured faculty?

To my chagrin, the professional literature and research offered little assistance. In the absence of information on the positive side of the ledger, however, I found considerable material on the negative potential of "burnout." In the September 21, 1981 issue of Time, Lance Marrow wrote an essay entitled "The Burnout of Almost Everyone," in which he stated:

> Burnout runs through the teaching profession like Asian flu - possibly because it depresses people to be physically assaulted by those they are trying to civilize. Two years ago, Willard McGuire, President of the National Education Association, said that burnout among teachers "threatens to reach hurricane force if it isn't checked soon."[1]

This concept of "burnout" - what it is and how to survive it - is at the heart of our concern for continued development of tenured faculty. An article in Psychology Today defines "burnout" as "A syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that frequently occurs among individuals who do 'people work' - spend considerable time in close encounters with others under conditions of chronic tension and stress."[2]

Burnout is progressive, occuring over a period of time. Authors James P. Spradley and Robert L. Veninga identified five stages that lead from a stressful job to burnout: (1) The honeymoon - intense enthusiasm in job satisfaction that, for all but a few dynamos, eventually gives way to a time when valuable energy reserves begin to drain off; (2) Fuel shortage - fatigue, sleep disturbances, possibly some escapist drinking or shopping binges and other early warning signals; (3) Chronic symptoms - exhaustion, physical illness, acute anger and depression; (4) Crisis - illness that may become incapacitating, deep pessimism, self doubt, obsession with one's own problems; (5) Hitting the wall - career and even life threatened.[3]

Widespread attention to the concept of burnout along with theories and prescriptions for dealing with "mid-life crises" have obvious implications for the tenured faculty in communication education. Stress, generated by our nation's economic situation, retrenchment and absence of economic rewards in teaching, and repetition of instructional patterns combined with feelings of "who cares?" may in the long run have debilitating consequences.

Very few professors, once given tenure, leave academic life until they retire. "The tenure system provides an extraordinary incentive to faculty to stay on the job; it also fosters the myth that all will remain dedicated and effective as teachers for the next thirty years, and none will ever go into another line of work."[4] Some faculty members will likely continue to grow bored with teaching and feel trapped within the narrow frame of competence that had earlier brought them rewards. Other professors might find their ambitions reawakened outside academic life and such people would benefit from mid-career transition, and in the case of uninspired, resentful,

or severely limited teachers, the institution clearly would benefit as well.

To avert such problems, what options are available to us as administrators, to help the development of our mid-career faculty? In the absence of scholarly supporting material, I can merely report what has been attempted at my own institution, the University of Kansas. We have promoted faculty development through: (1) a systematic approach to long-term planning; (2) instituting intra-university visiting professorships; and (3) promoting opportunities for faculty exchanges with other universities.

For the past three years we have been engaged in a systematic form of long-term planning. Each faculty member and each program within the Department of Speech and Drama is asked annually to prepare a three-year plan. This plan includes courses to be taught, research to be conducted, services to be performed, professional activities expected, and any anticipated factors such as leaves or grants that would require adjustments. Our utilization of summer session faculty and off-campus teaching are also major concerns. After individuals have prepared their plan, the composite provides a better picture for the total area program. Special areas of deficiency, such as a number of grants anticipated and courses not being offered in a given semester, are able to be identified.

Each year, then, the faculty member and program update this plan and indicate whether or not the goals for the previous year have been met and what modifications are required for future planning. An additional year is then added to the plan.

In line with our departmental goal setting and plan for the future, our entire University is now engaged in a five-year plan based in part upon an intensive self-study. This plan is designed to develop an outline for improvement of the quality of all departments within the University.

The plan includes specific goals and a timetable for reaching these goals. We are told that the plan should address improvement of quality within existing resources and identify those areas where specific additional resources would have a significant effect upon the quality of the program.

The implications for tenured faculty are that they should recognize the control they have over their professional careers. The planning session provides dialogue about aspirations and needs for change. If a person continues to teach the same course year in and year out, options can be explored. Plans for funded leaves can be suggested, and the faculty member can be encouraged to develop new courses in areas of special interests, or work with colleagues to combine expertise for research or teaching. For example, in the past we have developed courses in "Organizational Communication in Multi-National Organizations," team-taught by an organizational communication specialist and an intercultural communication specialist; and a course for acting in film taught by a drama professor and a media professor. New courses growing from the planning conferences include a voice development course for theatre students taught by a member of our Speech-Language-Hearing faculty and a new course in stress management. My personal experiences collaborate the opinion of Jack Gibb that:

> People grow, produce, and learn best when they set their own goals, choose activities that they see as related to their goals, and have a wide range of freedom and choice in all parts of their lives. Under most conditions persons are highly motivated, like to take responsibilities, can be trusted to put out a great deal of effort toward organizational goals, are creative and imaginative, and tend to want to cooperate with others.[5]

The second approach that the University of Kansas has employed for the continued development of tenured faculty is a system of intra-university visiting professorships. This plan was originated by Sally Yeates Sedelow, Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and initially funded by the Exxon Corporation as grants for "Career Renewal and Development." Currently the program is sustained from internal university resources.

Operationally, the awards approximate intra-university sabbatical leaves. The award provides one month's summer salary plus an academic year free of departmental responsibilities in order for the faculty member to take courses as well as to team-teach in one, or at most two, courses in another department or school at the University of Kansas. In exceptional circumstances, a faculty member may be permitted to take courses and team-teach courses with another sub-discipline in that faculty member's own department; this option is permitted only if different methodologies are involved, as in the case in my own department which covers a wide range of disciplines. The primary emphasis of the project, however, is upon awards for work within departments other than a given faculty member's home department. A screening committee with representatives from the College as well as from other schools and units within the University review applications and select the successful candidates.

The impact of the Professorships are assessed on the following grounds: existing courses taught by faculty members for whom the Visiting Professorships provide the requisite skills for the courses in question; new courses generated (including interdisciplinary courses); revision of existing courses; interdisciplinary research projects; interdisciplinary research seminars; papers and publications resulting from these efforts. No single professorship

is expected to produce results in all of the areas cited; for example, a faculty member acquiring a new methodology or information base sufficient to teach courses in areas new to that faculty member would not be expected immediately to publish in that area.

An example of an application affecting our department is: a professor who teaches political rhetoric wishes to work in the Political Science Department. In the year the professor seeks to attain two goals: a better grounding in quantitative resource methods, such as survey analysis, contract analysis, and studies comparing campaign variables; and, second, gain greater familiarity with the literature of political science. Other examples are a French professor who wishes to learn improvisational theatre techniques for teaching basic language courses, and a forensics teacher who wishes closer liasion with the School of Law with focus on jury techniques.

I believe that this program of intra-university visiting professorships has a great deal of promise by providing incentives for faculty to engage in interdisciplinary work. I believe other institutions could adapt this plan.

The third approach to faculty development lies in the possibilities offered by such programs as the Fulbright Exchange program and other University Exchange programs. For example, we are currently negotiating to have one of our professors trade places with an instructor in England for a calendar year under the Fulbright program. We will continue to pay the salary of our faculty member and the English institution will continue to pay theirs. We have also tried arrangements with other universities in such ways as exchanging theatre directors for a play. This experience can be rewarding for the director and also provide a stimulus for the academic and production programs.

A widespread program of faculty exchanges among institutions would allow professors to meet and work with new colleagues, use the facilities of other institutions, and broaden their experience of the academic world -- all at virtually no cost to the institutions involved. Professors on exchange could continue to be paid by their own institution so that the transaction would have no financial liability. A couple of professors might tentatively agree upon a mutually satisfactory exchange, and then seek approval from their respective departments or academic units. In this period when a high percentage of faculty are tenured and when tight budgets rarely permit new hirings except to replace professors when they retire, a vigorous and flexible program of faculty exchanges can offer relief from feelings of claustrophobia that might otherwise be felt in many departments.

Finally, a new program is needed for professors who want opportunities for their own development less drastic than leaving academic life but more flexible than those at simply teaching at another institution through an exchange program. Traditionally, sabbatical programs have allowed professors to take some time off at fixed intervals, provided that they stayed at a particular institution long enough to be eligible, and in some cases, provided that their proposal for spending the time was approved by whomever was in charge when the sabbatical came due. Unfortunately, the developmental needs of professors do not always coincide exactly with the cycle of the magic number seven, nor do they always require one long time off, rather than several shorter periods.

The Group for Human Development in Higher Education has proposed that in place of the sabbatical system, colleges and universities could pay time-off credits into a national fund, similar to TIAA-CREF.[6] Credits would be

paid not once every seven years, as now, but divided into monthly installments. Once paid into the fund, they would become the property of each faculty member, to be drawn upon whenever he or she could take leaves. The fund could arrange installments that would match what the existing sabbatical programs costs each institution. A flexible program of credits that could be used at times when a professor most needed them could become much more popular than the present sabbatical system, and this provision for time-off might have implications far beyond the academic system. People in other fields might well set up time-off plans supported by funds paid as part of employee benefits and held on behalf of individuals, rather than tied to any employer.

As administrators in programs of communication, we should be able to practice what we teach. By maintaining open channels of communication with our faculty in making long-range plans, by expanding options for career development through exposure to other disciplines and institutions, and by being sensitive to signs of depression and stress, we may be able to avert some cases of burnout and continue the professional development of our tenured faculty. As Spradley and Veninga state: "If you hold a management position, no matter at what level...you have the power to make work more human...to prevent devastation in the lives of your employees. It is a challenge that more and more enlightened managers are responding to, and in the process they are becoming effective stress managers."

NOTES

[1]Lance Marrow, "The Burnout of Almost Everyone," Time, September 21, 1981, p. 84.

[2]Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson, Psychology Today, May 1979.

[3]The Work Stress Connection: How to Cope with Job Burnout, Little, Brown, and Co., 1981.

[4]No author designated. "Mid-Career Transitions," Faculty Development in a Time of Retrenchment, Group for Human Development in Higher Education, 1974, p. 77.

[5]Jack Gibb, "Dynamics of Leadership," Current Issues in Higher Education, American Association for Higher Education, 1967.

[6]"Mid-Career Transitions," p. 80.